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DANC 404.01: Advanced Techniques in Modern Dance

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University of Montana, School of Theatre and Dance
71348 - DANC 400 - 01: Modern IV 3 credits
73298 - DANC 404 - 01: Advanced Techniques in Modern Dance 3 credits
Fall 2014 M W F 9:10am-11:00am PARTV 005

Instructor: **Heidi Jones Eggert**
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Office: PARTV 186
Office hours: [Wed 11:00-12:00](#)
[Thurs 10:30-11:30](#) [Fri 12:00-1:00](#)

"The truest expression of a people is in its dance and in its music. Bodies never lie."
~Agnes de Mille

Course Description

A contemporary modern dance class inviting advanced students to confront complex phrase work with an awareness of the changing body relationship – mind, body, emotion, energy, performance... while demonstrating proficiency in various motion techniques. The intent of the course is successful upon a continued commitment towards, and consistency in, a professional and positive attitude, refining technique, creative interpretation and artistic expression. Additionally, stepping into a leadership roll will be the expectation. There will be an underlying emphasis on alignment and kinesiology sound movement patterns.

Objectives

- To introduce contemporary dance technique philosophies, somatic approaches, partner techniques, improvisation and performance disciplines in a safe yet challenging environment.
- To provide an outlet in which students are encouraged to advance and further develop their technical, kinesthetic, intellectual and creative capacities in movement.
- To demonstrate personal ownership (voice) of movement.
- To interact with other dancers, creating a shared experience of phrase work and improvisation.
- To practice professionalism, etiquette and performance ability – self-responsibility, broad qualitative range, positive/inquisitive attitude, versatility, knowledge and investigation of individual strengths and weaknesses
- To critically evaluate and objectively discuss dance performance (including technique and expression)
- To defend a grand appreciation of dance
 - ❖ **Advanced Techniques** – in the combined level classroom of this year, advanced dancers will assume a roll of leadership. This may be executed by strategic placement in the studio, volunteering to perform with a group needing more assistance and serving as a reference and a consistent positive example.

Course Content

As an **advancing dancer proficient in developing technique, artistry and etiquette** it is expected that by the completion of this course the student will be able to achieve the below mentioned elements: (*Italicized items indicate the skill to be acquired in Level IV/Advanced technique, non-italicized items reflect skills that have been acquired previously*)

A. Demonstration of Line and Form

- a. Students are proficient in ability to move upper body without displacing the pelvis
- b. Students excel in their understanding of rotated and parallel positions
- c. Students are strongly integrated in their bodies
- d. Students have a strong sense of line and shape
- e. Students are able to manipulate line and form with ease
- f. *Students demonstrate the capacity to create and dissolve line and form with conscious, in the moment investment*

B. Dynamic Alignment

- a. Students excel in their understanding of alignment
- b. Students excel in their ability to execute plie (demi and grand) in parallel, first, second, third positions and demi plie in fourth position

- c. Students excel in their ability to land from jumps
 - d. Students excel in their understanding of alignment in vertical and non-vertical positions
 - e. Students understand pelvic alignment and the neutral pelvis
 - f. Students have clear head-tail coordination in all body patterns (core-distal, body-half, upper-lower, cross-lateral, spiral)
 - g. Students are able to achieve freedom from excess joint tension
 - h. *Students demonstrate the ability to move through complex phrases with sound functioning and awareness of changing body relationship*
- C. Effective Body Patterning
- a. Students excel in their ability to coordinate breath with movement
 - b. Students understand all concepts of Body Patterning:
 - *Breath *Core/Distal *Head/Tail *Body Half *Upper/Lower
 - *Cross lateral *Contra lateral *Spiral
 - c. Students excel in their ability to fall and recover the center of the body
 - d. Students excel in their ability to execute turns, both stationary and locomotor
 - e. Students are proficient at isolating thigh joint in retire, extensions and battement
 - f. Students excel in their ability to turn off their vertical axis
 - g. *Students demonstrate freedom from tension*
 - h. *Students demonstrate efficient use of energy*
- D. Spatial Awareness
- a. Students excel in their understanding of kinesphere, personal space and shared space
 - b. Students excel in their understanding of basic partnering skills
 - c. Students excel in their ability to move within space while maintaining relationship to others
 - d. Students excel in their ability to dance according to varied facings
 - e. Students excel in their spatial awareness and spatial intent
 - f. Students excel in their ability to interact with other dancers
 - g. Students excel in their ability to make dance a shared experience
 - h. Students excel in their ability to represent clear directional and spatial intent
 - i. *Students demonstrate the ability to readily adapt to new performance/dance environments*
- E. Rhythmic Accuracy
- a. Students excel in their understanding of time
 - b. Students excel in their ability to dance with an awareness of the beginnings and endings of phrases
 - c. Students excel in their ability to accent movement
 - d. Students excel in their ability to distinguish the center of the beat
 - e. Students excel in their ability to dance within complex rhythmic structures, counting patterns and unconventional time signatures
 - f. Students are skillful in dancing to traditional rhythms (3s, 4s, 6s, 8s) and unconventional collections of counts with overall musicality
 - g. *Students demonstrate rhythmic sophistication*
 - h. *Students demonstrate the ability to work with internal and external rhythmic structures*
- F. Initiation and Follow-Through
- a. Students excel in their awareness of body part initiation
 - b. Students excel in their ability to use weight and momentum in body part initiation
 - c. Students excel in their ability to distinguish successive or sequential vs. simultaneous movement
 - d. Students move with both internal and external focus
 - e. Students excel in their understanding of point of initiation
 - f. Students demonstrate strong body/eye focus
 - g. *Students develop sophisticated demonstration of multiple initiation points and the ability to create focus in the body with clear follow-through*
- G. Strength, Flexibility and Endurance
- a. Students have strong torso, feet, arms and overall alignment
 - b. Students descend to and ascend from the floor safely
 - c. Students have familiarity with proper stretching techniques for major muscle groups
 - d. Students have the ability to easily complete a two-hour technique class: demonstrating the endurance to complete a two hour class without strain
 - e. Student have clear articulation in feet
 - f. Students easily complete long and complex movement sequences
 - g. Students excel in their ability to do floor work and take weight into the upper body
 - h. Students understand developing “stability through mobility”

- i. Students have the capacity to move through sequences with appropriately applied energy
 - j. *Students demonstrate the capacity to individually distinguish and manifest dynamic, spatial and expressive requirements from the beginning the end of movements throughout the entire class*
- H. Professionalism, Etiquette and Performance Ability
- a. Students excel in their understanding of movement quality
 - b. Students excel in their concentration efforts
 - c. Students demonstrate willingness to experiment
 - d. Students have an appreciation for different movement approaches
 - e. Students move through the space with confidence
 - f. Students have peer assessment skills
 - g. *Students develop self-responsibility*
 - h. *Students develop a broad qualitative range*
 - i. *Students practice a professional attitude at all times*
 - j. *Students take artistic risk with the interpretation of material and demonstration of performance quality*
 - k. *Students learn and interpret material quickly with attention to detail and nuance*
 - l. *Students develop a personal performance persona*
 - m. *Students exhibit a strong ensemble awareness*
 - n. *Students demonstrate knowledge and integration of individual skills, strengths and weaknesses*

Class Structure

Casual **in class assignments** in spontaneous composition and performance will take place on a semi-regular basis. These may be individual or in small groups. Class time will be dedicated to group choreography assignments. Please be respectful of your peers and recognize the importance of your consistent contribution.

Class begins promptly at **9:10am**. Students arriving more than 10 minutes late will not be permitted to take class (for safety purposes and etiquette practices), and will instead observe and take notes. Class will end at **11:00pm**. Students are required to remain in class until its conclusion with the closing circle. Consistent tardiness or early departure from class will result in the lowering of one's grade.

To **avoid injury**, please come to class prepared to move at the start of class. (If you know you need extra time/space to stay safe, arrive early.) Please notify the instructor of any injury (current or past) that may affect your full performance in class.

Should a student observe class, it is expected that the student engage by watching the class and dutifully apply what is being taught and discussed to her/his own improvement in class. This **observation should result in a set of notes** that will be submitted to the instructor at the conclusion of the class observed. While observing class, students are required to be mindful and quiet as to not detract from the teaching and performance efficacy of the teacher, classmates (and accompanist when applicable). More than two observations equal an absence. *see "Expectations" for more on participation/attendance. If a student sits out for a week of class (3 classes), an entire letter grade will be deducted from the student's grade.

Your **dance attire** should not restrict or hide your movement. Take into account that there is potential for any part of the body to be in contact with the floor, at any given time; and for safety, keep the body warm from the beginning until the end of class = bring extra clothing. Movement will be experienced with bare feet. It is *highly* recommended that dancers own and bring kneepads to class. These can be ordered on line at: www.contactquarterly.com. Please, no street shoes in the dance studios.

Physical contact and touch will be used as teaching methods to correct alignment and suggest new patterns of movement. The teacher and fellow students will facilitate this. If you have any concerns with this style of teaching/learning please let the instructor know, as she will find alternative methods.

Expectations: Attendance and Grading Policy

Attendance is important in any field, but vital in the field of dance. Learning to dance requires that your body do it. You will not gain in flexibility, and strength, or in your ability to pick up movement or generate your own movement by hearing about what happened from a classmate, or reading a book. In other words, there is no way to make up the material you miss.

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN EVERY CLASS. However, knowing that unpredictable circumstances may arise, students are granted one permissible absence. Students may also make up two absences by participating in (if appropriate) or watching, *and* writing a one-page observation of another dance class. **AFTER A STUDENT HAS USED HER/HIS SINGLE ABSENCE AND TWO MAKEUPS, THE STUDENT WILL BE DOCKED ONE-THIRD OF A GRADE FOR EVERY ABSENCE FOLLOWING.** (see attached: UM Dance Program - Injury Policy)

Grading: Dance is different from many other fields in that a student's work is not as quantifiable as it is in some other subjects, such as history or math. For this reason grading is not assigned a point breakdown. To earn an "A" a student must:

- Consistently reach above and beyond average participation
- Demonstrate proficiency in the areas listed within the "Course Content" of this syllabus.
- Have an energetic, attentive and inquisitive attitude
- Progress over the semester
- And of course, fulfill all attendance, critique, journal and self-assessment requirements.

Students may receive an "incomplete" (I) only if there are exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed with the instructor.

Performance Attendance & Written Assignments

Students are required to attend **four artistic events** during the fall term. (plus *strongly encouraged* to attend dance events at large; in Missoula, at the Myrna Loy Center in Helena and at the Hamilton Center for the Performing Arts.)

Attendance is required at the following:

- **Dancers on Location (Site Specific):**
 - October 4-5 (Sat-Sun) noon; Mansfield Library Mall; free
- **Dance Up Close:**
 - November 4-8 (Tues-Sat) 7:30pm, Masquer Theatre; plus 2:00 on Sat.
 - \$9 General Admission, \$6 required students. Tickets at Box Office in PARTV lobby
- **Dance Studio Works:**
 - November 21-22 (Fri-Sat) 6:30 and 8:30 each night, Open Space;
 - General Admission \$5/ one show, or \$8/both shows. Tickets at the door

AND choose **one** of the following (required):

- **Settle**, Aug. 29-30 and Sept 5-6 (Fri-Sat) at 7:30 pm and 2:00 on 9/6, Open Space;
 - Tickets at barebaitdance.org or \$12 at door day of show
- **Fingertips Toward Floor, Head Follows or The Lazy Sexy Peepshow**
 - Oct 17-19 (Fri-Sun) at 7:30pm. Stage 112 at Elk's Lodge, 112 N Pattee;
 - Tickets \$10 in advance \$12 day of show at barebaitdance.org
- **Headwaters Gala Concert**, November 21-23 (Fri-Sun) at 7:30pm and Sun matinee.
 - MCT, Center for the Performing Arts, 200 N Adams St;
 - Tickets \$15 General and \$10 students at headwatersdance.org

The instructor will provide detailed guidelines for written critique(s), and other response projects. Students will need to give specific examples in their writing, so it is recommended that she/he take notes either during or immediately following each event. The student's grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each assignment that is not submitted.

Journal/Self-Assessment Writings

Throughout the course of the semester, you will be asked to reflect upon and assess your growth in this class. These writings may take place in class, but most likely outside of the studio. In lieu of a hard-copy weekly journal your teacher will provide you with prompts, in class and via Moodle. Included in your direct response to a question (on Moodle), feel free to include details regarding your development as a dancer, performer, artist, global citizen... Include aspects of what is going well, where you are struggling, what your questions are...

Odds and Ends

- Additional assignments *may* be scheduled throughout the semester at the discretion of the instructor.
- **** We may meet during finals week on Wednesday, December 10th 8:00-10:00am ** *date/time may be negotiable***
- If at any point you feel further discussion would aid your development, please schedule a meeting with the instructor.
- If you are sick or injured please talk to the instructor as soon possible before class. This includes any pre-existing conditions/injuries that should be shared.
- If you get injured during class get the instructor's attention immediately!
- Restrooms / locker rooms are located across the hall.
- **Locker rentals are required for all students in the dance classes.** We recommend that you do not leave personal belongings unattended in the dressing rooms or hallways, as thefts unfortunately occur. Backpacks and personal belongings are not allowed in dance studios, with the exception of water bottles. Lockers must be rented for \$7/semester, or \$13/two semesters. For details, see the Dance Program administrative assistant, PARTV 199 (door across from women's dressing room, then up the stairs.)

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/theatredance/about/handbook>.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.

Due to safety considerations, at **no** point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student **without my consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.